

President Joaquim Chissano Visits the National Institute of Agronomy

President Joaquim Chissano, Minister Helder Muteia, U.S. Ambassador Helen La Lime, and Mr. Jay L. Knott, Director of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Mozambique made a grand tour of the Instituto Nacional de Investigacao Agronomia (INIA) on January 14. They walked along the tree-lined paths between the buildings on the Instituto Nacional de Investigacao Agronomia INIA campus, talking to botanists, agronomists, and other scientists, and observed technicians working with tiny seedlings and plants. This tour was expressly for the purpose of showing the President and other dignitaries the accomplishments achieved by the Mozambicans, specifically the new tissue culture laboratory designed to provide farmers with stronger, healthier food plants. As one of the founding members of the Partnership to Cut Hunger in Africa and the new Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), President Chissano has long been an advocate of agricultural development.

Through the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa, the U.S. has been supporting the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in its efforts to raise the productivity of food and export products and increase the stability of and volume of supplies. The new tissue culture laboratory, which was renovated with the assistance of the U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, will mark Mozambique's new venture into harnessing new technology to improve agricultural production. The laboratory's renovation included remodeling the first floor, the purchase of laboratory equipment, and training for four technicians.

The availability of a tissue culture laboratory in Mozambique will assure that the highest quality of planting material resistant to such diseases as Cassava Brown Streak Disease is widely available, giving rural Mozambicans a stable food supply of major crops such as cassava, sweet potato and banana as well as access to medicinal and income generating crops such as African potato, pineapple and vanilla. A stable food supply means a stable rural economy and healthier people.

During the tour the President and the other dignitaries also visited the herbarium, the gene bank, the plant quarantine, the soil laboratory and geographic information systems, the famine early warning system (FEWS) Network and Southern Africa Root Crops Research Network (SAARNET) as well as the laboratory. The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, worked in partnership with the Government of the Republic of Mozambique, to establish the FEWSNET office. FEWSNET has a worldwide reputation as the leading early warning and food security monitoring and assessment organization in the world.